IN THE CLAIMS

Kindly amend independent claims 1, 9, 15 and 21 as shown in the following claim listing:

1.(currently amended) An endoscopic imaging apparatus comprising:
an endoscope including a distal end; at least one ultrasound transducer contained within said distal end; and ~~a~~ an outer protective shell directly covering said distal end and fabricated from an electrically insulating material having a Thermal Conductance greater than 1 W/M-°K overlaying at least a portion of said distal end.

2. (original) The endoscopic imaging apparatus as in Claim 1, further comprising:controls for controlling the movement of the distal end; a signal processor for processing received signals from said at least one ultrasound transducer; and means for energizing the at least one ultrasonic transducer.

3. (original) The apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein said covering is in thermal contact with the at least one ultrasound transducer.

4. (original) The apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein said material is non-toxic.

5.(original) The apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein said material is non-reactive in the presence of bodily fluids.

6.(original) The apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein said material is selected from the group consisting of ceramic and diamond-coated copper.

7. (previously presented) The apparatus as in Claim 1,

wherein said material comprises an Alumina-based ceramic.

8.(original) The apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein said material has a Thermal Conductance of approximately 30 W/M-°K.

9.(currently amended) An apparatus for dissipating thermal energy produced by an endoscopic imaging apparatus, wherein the apparatus is configured and dimensioned to mate with a distal end of said imaging apparatus for dissipating thermal energy produced at said distal end, said apparatus fabricated from an electrically insulating material having a Thermal Conductance greater than 1 W/M-°K and comprising an outer protective shell directly covering said distal end.

10.(original) The apparatus as in Claim 9, wherein said material is selected from the group consisting of ceramic and diamond-coated copper.

11.(previously presented) The apparatus as in Claim 9, wherein said material comprises an Alumina-based ceramic.

12. (original) The apparatus as in Claim 9, wherein said material is non-toxic when in contact with a patient's internal structures.

13. (original) The apparatus as in Claim 9, wherein said material is non-reactive in the presence of bodily fluids.

14.(original) The apparatus as in Claim 9, wherein said material has a Thermal Conductance of approximately 30 W/M-°K.

15. (currently amended) A method for scanning a patient's heart using a TEE probe comprising of the steps of:

providing an endoscope having a distal end having a portion thereof forming an outer protective shell directly covering said distal end fabricated from an electrically insulating material having a Thermal Conductance greater than 1 W/M-°K; and guiding the endoscope including a distal end to obtain a scan of the patient's heart.

16. (original) The method as in Claim 15, wherein said material is non-toxic.

17. (original) The method as in Claim 15, wherein said material is non-reactive in the presence of bodily fluids.

18. (original) The method as in Claim 15, wherein said material is selected from the group consisting of ceramic and diamond-coated Copper.

19. (previously presented) The method as in Claim 15, wherein said material is an Alumina-based ceramic.

20. (original) The method as in Claim 15, wherein said material has a Thermal Conductance of approximately 30 W/M-°K.

21. (currently amended) A device for passively dissipating thermal energy produced by at least one transducer located at a distal end of an endoscopic imaging apparatus, wherein said device comprises an outer protective shell directly covering said distal end and is configured and dimensioned to encase the at least one transducer, said device having at least the following properties:electrically insulating; a Thermal Conductance greater than 1 W/M-°K; and substantially non-reactivity in the presence of bodily fluids.